



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
Washington, D.C. 20231
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/672,793	09/29/2000	Daniel M. Barich	47440-027	8604

7590

08/28/2002

McDermott Will & Emery
600 13th Street NW
Washington, DC 20005-3096

EXAMINER

GARBER, CHARLES D

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2856

DATE MAILED: 08/28/2002


Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/672,793

Applicant(s)

BARICH ET AL. 

Examiner

Charles D Garber

Art Unit

2850

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 29 September 2000.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Art Unit: 2850

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

This application has been filed with informal drawings which are acceptable for examination purposes only. Formal drawings will be required when the application is allowed.

Specification

The lengthy specification has not been checked to the extent necessary to determine the presence of all possible minor errors. Applicant's cooperation is requested in correcting any errors of which applicant may become aware in the specification.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 1 and 17 include the limitation "...exhaustive list of sites to be inspected". The term "exhaustive" meaning thorough is subjective and therefore indefinite. Claims 2-16 and 18-20 depending from either claim 1 or 17 are therefore indefinite for the same reason. For the purposes of further examination Examiner will assume the list may include one or more sites to be inspected.

Claim 1 refers to an "instruction set" (line 4 of the claim) from which a list of sites is derived as well as "the instructions" in accordance with which an inspection is carried out. It is not clear if "the instructions" are the "the instruction set" which is a list of sites or if "the instructions" is a more detailed step by step procedure to carry out an inspection at each site. If Applicant intended the first alternative Examiner considers the claim indefinite because a list of sites is not a detailed instruction procedure and if Applicant intended the second alternative "the instruction" is lacking antecedent basis in the claim. Claims 2-12 depending from claim 1 are indefinite for the same reason. For the purposes of further examination Examiner will assume "the instructions" are detailed inspection steps for an inspection site and "instruction set" is a list of possible inspection sites.

Claims 3 and 19 include the limitation "a plurality of inspection sites covered by 49 C.F.R. 180.509, SSIP, and Rule 88.B.2." The claim scope is uncertain since the cited regulation and rule may be subject to change. Furthermore, the claim does not indicate which specific portions of the cited regulations and rules (i.e. all, substantially all, any) are included in the limitation of the claim. Claims 4-12 and 20 depending from either claim 3 or 19 are indefinite for the same reason.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

*Why is Applicant
wasn't he
written for
1st portion of the
any rule in
claim?*

*if needs
changes are
the
time
will be claim
still (somehow)
can the
well known
portion of
the changed
rule. Aff
statements
to put.*

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

Claims 1-3, 17-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over McCasland (U.S. Patent 5,856,931).

Regarding claims 1, 3, 17 and 19, McCasland discloses inspection method and system (title) for trucks (column 1, line 55), manufacturing machines (column 2 line 32), roller coasters, and railroad tanker cars (column 3 lines 3-4). The method and system includes a portable device used to direct users to various inspection points on various machines (column 6 lines 19-25). The reference to various machines with various elements is specifically given by way of example only and the reference makes clear that inspection of other types of equipment such as trucks and railroad cars is included in the scope of the invention. The figures 2-5 illustrate method directs the user to specific assets such as machines A, B and C and to peculiar inspection points on each machine. The hierarchical structure of various inspection points on various assets is maintained in a database. This in combination with the process of directing the user to these assets is substantively equivalent to the instant invention process of selecting from an instruction set a list of one or more sites to be inspected for the identified asset or specifically vehicle as in the instant invention.

McCasland also discloses that once an optimized "inspection route" or list of specific inspection points by asset is determined the invention provides direction to the user and instructions for tasks relative to each inspection point (column 3 lines 39-42). This is considered substantively equivalent to inspection each of the listed sites in accord with the instructions set forth for each of the listed sites in the instruction set as in the instant invention.

McCasland also discloses the user records activities or information by using the portable device (column 3 lines 55-58), a module 503 records all tasks performed, which equipment was inspection, which equipment was flagged for further attention along with quantity of products used to perform inspection, a module 505 which takes this information for failure tracking and analysis (column 7 line 33 to column 8 line 4). This is considered substantively equivalent to recording data derived from implementation of the inspections conducted at each of the list of sites as in the instant invention.

Though McCasland does not expressly recite the method includes requalification it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art that once an inspection is successfully carried out an element with no adverse indications would be qualified to advantageously remain in service until the next inspection.

As for claims 2 and 18, McCasland as discussed above taught that rail tank cars may be inspected in accordance with the invention. Regulated and non-regulated cars would encompass the entire population of tank cars which is anticipated by McCasland.

Claims 4-16 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over McCasland (U.S. Patent 5,856,931) as applied to preceding claims above and further in view of 49 CFR 180.509.

Regarding claim 4, though the references do not expressly teach a visual inspection of the tank shell interior and exterior; piping, valves, fittings and gaskets; brake rigging, safety appliances, draft system, valves and fittings; closures and protective housings on the tank car; and all required markings on the tank car, 49 CFR 180.509 (hereinafter referred to as "Regulation") requires those responsible for maintaining tank cars to ensure continuing qualification and re-inspection of the tank shell interior and exterior; piping, valves, fittings and gaskets, safety appliances, valves and fittings; closures and protective housings on the tank car; and all required markings on the tank car. Though the Regulation does not specifically address brake rigging and draft system for continuing qualification the Regulation does include the broad requirement to include any system or element that may effect safety and one skilled in the art would have known that faulty brakes or draft system would impair safety.

As for claims 5, Regulation also requires visual inspection of all fillet welds. Though the Regulation does not expressly recite that inspection is required of welds that are greater than 1/4" and within 4 feet of a bottom longitudinal centerline of the tank car one of ordinary skill in the art would have known where and of what types are at greatest risk of failure.

As for claim 6, Regulation requires the pressure leak testing of all piping in a tank car which obviously includes any heating coils that may be found within the tank car.

As for claim 7, Regulation requires ultrasonic flaw detection on all circumferential butt welds of the tank shell at least within two feet of a bottom longitudinal centerline of the tank car.

As for claim 8, Regulation requires thickness examination of at least one of the tank shell, heads, sumps, and nozzles for each of at least one compartment. Though regulation is not specific about what type of technique should be used to determine material thickness, ultrasonic thickness (UT) determination is perhaps the most widely known method where access to both sides with a single instrument is not possible and one of ordinary skill would have known to use UT for this purpose. Regulation also does not expressly teach measuring the thickness of manways, however one of ordinary skill would have known that loss of thickness due to corrosion of manway material would jeopardize the safety of anyone walking the manways and that an inspection of the thickness would be in order in view of the Regulation requirement to inspect any element of safety on a tank car.

As for claim 9, Regulation requires inspection of at least one of the thermal protection systems, tank head puncture resistance systems, coupler vertical restraint systems, and systems used to protect discontinuities to ensure integrity. Though the Regulation does not recite which inspection technique should be used, one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made would have known that visual inspection is the simplest, requiring no specialized equipment but for perhaps a magnifying lens.

As for claim 10, Regulation requires testing the pressure relief device with air to ensure conformance with start-to-discharge pressure requirements. Regulation also

Art Unit: 2850

requires removing the pressure relief device from the tank car and inspecting for proper thickness. Improper thickness is an indication of corrosion damage. Though regulation is not specific about the use of visual inspection as the inspection method of choice, visual inspection is advantageous for reasons previously stated.

As for claim 11, Regulation requires inspecting the lining if any.

As for claim 12, Regulation requires performing a leakage pressure test of any compartment of a tank and all fittings and openings corresponding to the compartment.

As for claims 13, 14 and 20, Regulation requires inspection of any welds for defects and damage. One of ordinary skill would have known this includes the various types of welds enumerated in the instant invention.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Charles D Garber whose telephone number is (703) 308-6062. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday, 7:00 AM-3:30 PM.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hezron Williams can be reached on (703) 305-4705. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 308-7725 for regular communications and (703) 308-7725 for After Final communications.

Application/Control Number: 09/672,793
Art Unit: 2850

Page 9

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 305-4900.

cdg
August 22, 2002


HEZRON WILLIAMS
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800